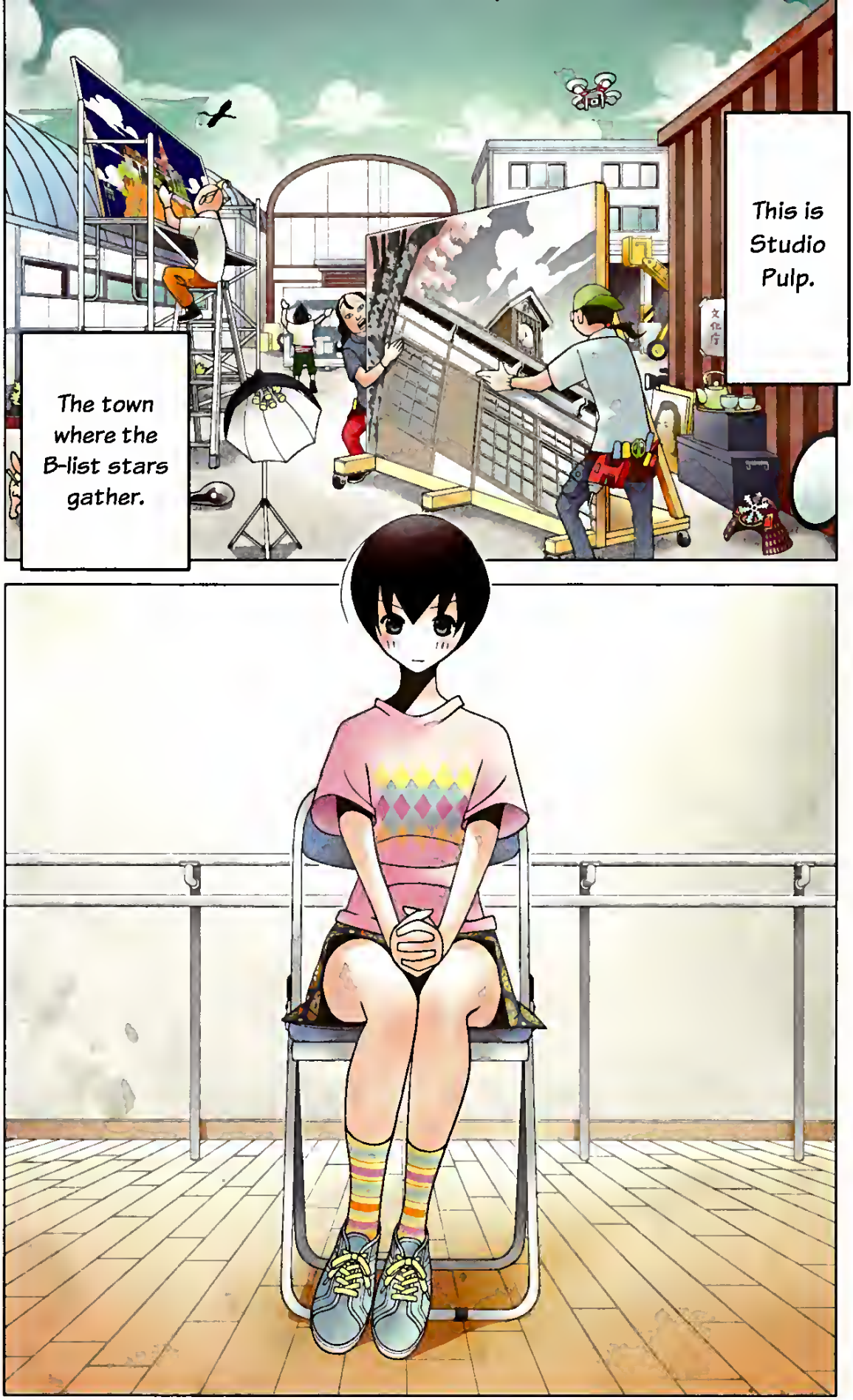
This is Studio Pulp.
The town where the B-list stars gather.

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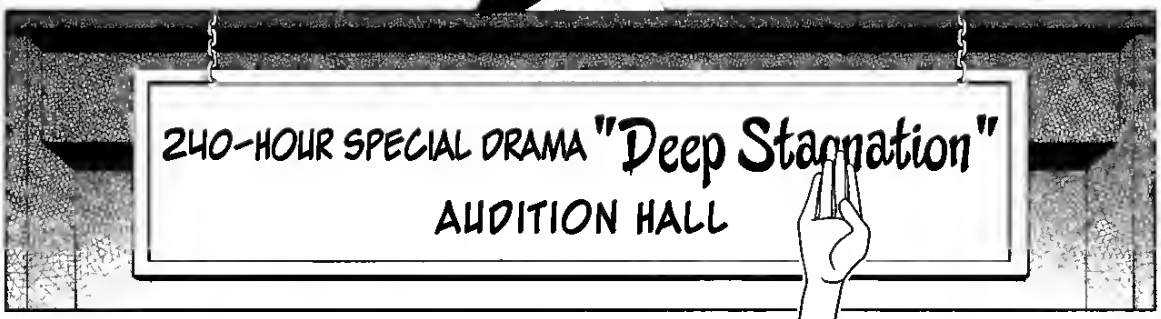
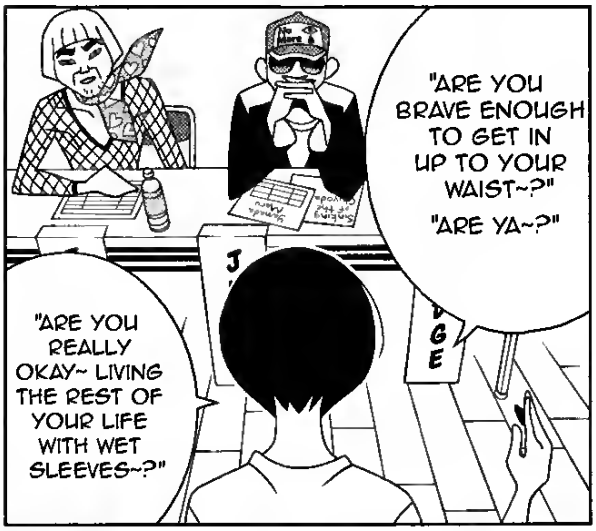
どきどき


240-HOUR SPECIAL DRAMA "Deep Stagnation"
AUDITION HALL


"ARE YOU BRAVE ENOUGH TO GET IN UP TO YOUR WAIST~?"
"ARE YA~?"
"ARE YOU REALLY OKAY~ LIVING THE REST OF YOUR LIFE WITH WET SLEEVES~?"

#34, YAKU-SHA-MARU HIROKO!
AUDI-TIONING FOR THE PART OF MIDORI NUMAKO!
す、

久米田康治
Koji Kumete
スタジオパルプ
studio pulp
Act 2.
WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO DO TO GET A PART AROUND HERE?
THEY'RE NOT JUST GOING TO GIVE AWAY PARTS TO NO-NAME FIRST-TIMERS WITHOUT ANY CONNECTIONS.
AH ...
ANOTHER FAILURE.
ゴロゴロガロ
EEEK!
むく
HEY! DEAD BODIES AREN'T SUPPOSED TO BE MOVING AROUND!
POLE STREET
すっ
Salary ¥1.8 million (including part-time gigs)
Bit Actor, Sasaki

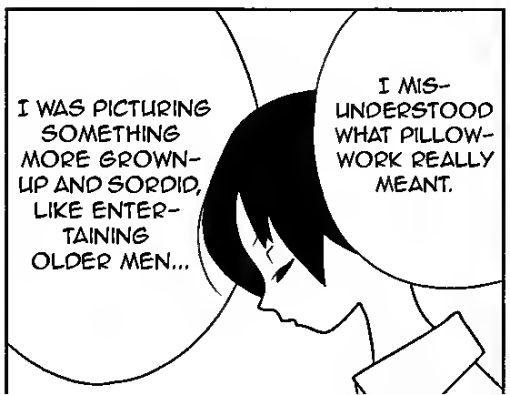
EXPLAIN IT FOR YOU INSTEAD?
HOW ABOUT I...
SORRY ABOUT THAT, DIRECTOR!
SHUT UP AND PLAY DEAD!
SASAKI'S ASSISTANT, MORIMOTO.
AND YOU ARE?
HE HAD A BRIEF PERIOD OF POPULARITY A LONG TIME AGO.
AN ASSISTANT FOR A BIT ACTOR?
IN OTHER WORDS...
RITE OF PASSAGE?
THERE'S A RITE OF PASSAGE THEY HAVE TO GO THROUGH FIRST.
BUT WHEN A NEWBIE LIKE YOU WANTS A PART...
100 HANDS
PILLOW-WORK.

ORTHO-PEDIC
Pillow Showcase
Other-Dimensional Relaxation
The optimal position to relieve shoulder stress
Includes 3-year warranty
SPECIAL PRICE ¥2,980

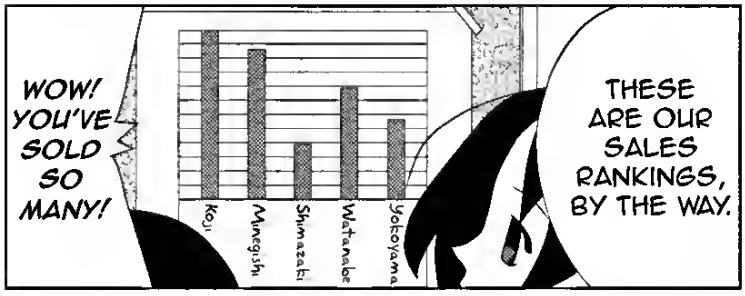
SELLING PILLOWS, OF COURSE.
UM... WHAT ARE WE DOING?

EVERYONE HAS TO GO THROUGH PILLOW-WORK BEFORE THEY CAN DEBUT, AFTER ALL.

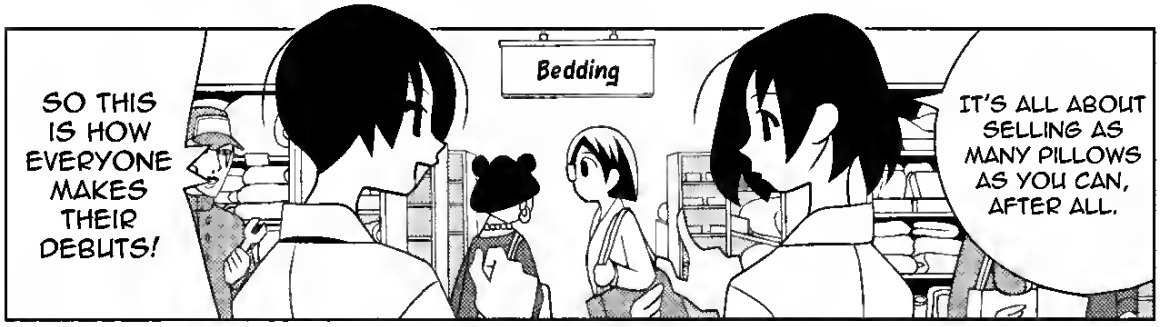
YOU MEAN "PILLOW-WORK"...
IS ABOUT ACTUALLY WORKING WITH PILLOWS !?


I MIS-UNDERSTOOD WHAT PILLOW-WORK REALLY MEANT.
I WAS PICTURING SOMETHING MORE GROWN-UP AND SORDID, LIKE ENTER-TAINING OLDER MEN...

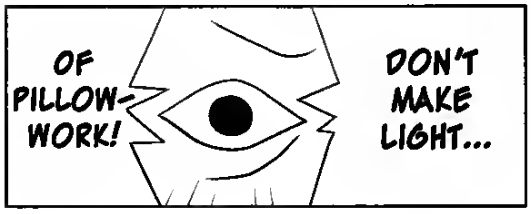
EVER BE SO SORDID AS THAT?
BUT HOW COULD REALITY...


WOW! YOU'VE SOLD SO MANY!
Koji
Minegishi
Shimazaki
Watanabe
Yokoyama
THESE ARE OUR SALES RANKINGS, BY THE WAY.

YOU'RE RIGHT, HOW COULD IT?


SO THIS IS HOW EVERYONE MAKES THEIR DEBUTS!
Bedding
IT'S ALL ABOUT SELLING AS MANY PILLOWS AS YOU CAN, AFTER ALL.

THE SHIFT MAN-AGER!
NOT SO NERVOUS, YOU SAY?


OF PILLOW-WORK!
DON'T MAKE LIGHT...

I'M NOT SO NERVOUS ANY-MORE!
TO THINK PILLOW-WORK COULD BE SO STRAIGHT-FORWARD...

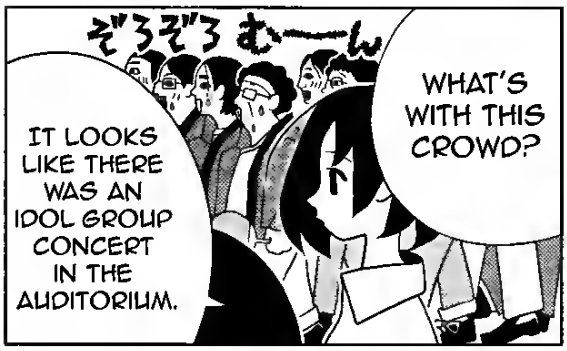
Shift Leader, Yomemakura Hagu
JUST BECAUSE WE CALL THEM ALL "PILLOWS" DOESN'T MEAN THERE AREN'T DIFFERENT KINDS.
HMPH.
EXCELLENT WORK TODAY, MANAGER YOME-MAKURA!
ISN'T THE FILLING THE ONLY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ANY OF THOSE?
ALL SORTS OF PILLOWS.
LOW-RESISTANCE PILLOWS.
BUCK-WHEAT CHAFF PILLOWS.
FEATHER PILLOWS.
OOOH, YOU'RE TAKASHI, ONE OF MY UNDER-CLASSMEN FROM THE REFUND ACADEMY!
HAGU-SENPAI! I'M HERE TO BUY A PILLOW!

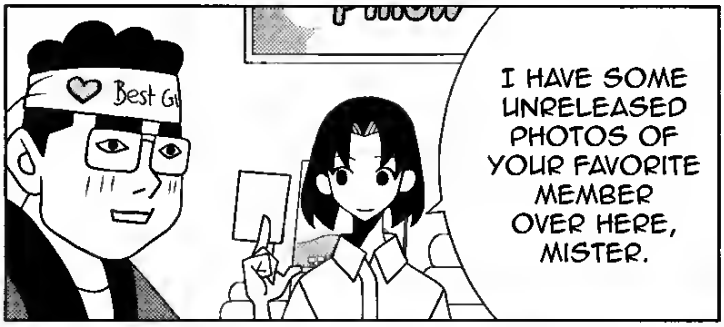
I ACTUALLY CAME HERE TODAY BECAUSE I HAVE SOMETHING I WANT TO ASK YOU ABOUT.
SURE. IF IT'S SOMETHING ABOUT PILLOWS, THEN ASK AWAY.
IT'S... A LITTLE BIT HARD TO SAY...
BUT I WAS HOPING YOU COULD GIVE ME A LECTURE ON PILLOW TALK.
YOU MEAN YOU DON'T KNOW ALREADY?
ビリッ
TAKE A GOOD LOOK!
IT GOES LIKE THIS!
IT LOOKS LIKE I'M GOING TO HAVE TO BRING YOU SOME RATHER UNPLEASANT NEWS TODAY, SENPAI.
I KNEW IT.
HAVE YOU LOST WEIGHT?
YOU'RE STILL THE CUTEST PILLOW IN THE WORLD TODAY!

PILLOW TALK ...
ISN'T ABOUT ACTUALLY TALKING TO YOUR PILLOW!
ガーン
WELL...
THEN WHAT DOES PILLOW TALK REALLY MEAN!?
HOW COULD YOU!?
THAT'S A LIE!!
IT'S THE TRUTH.
ぴし
ぴし
ぴし
ひえっ
あぁ
あぁ
I WON'T ACCEPT IT!
わぁ
あぁ
SUCH A FILTHY KIND OF TALK!

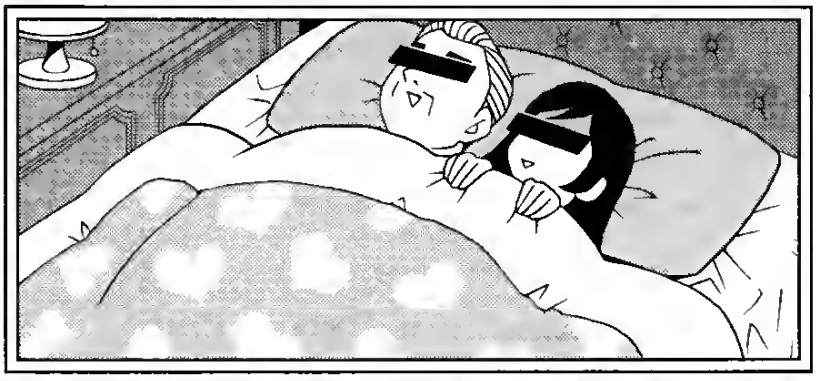
I GUESS WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO SELL THEM ALL OURSELVES.
LET'S DO OUR BEST.

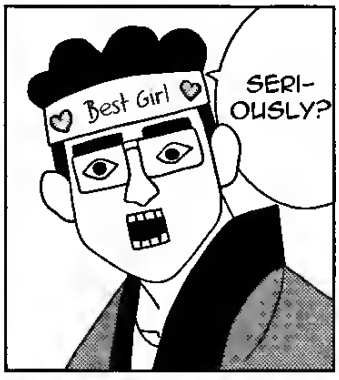
ORTHOPEDIC
Pillow Sho
SENPAI... REALITY IS A HARSH PLACE.
NOW LOOK WHAT YOU'VE GONE AND DONE.

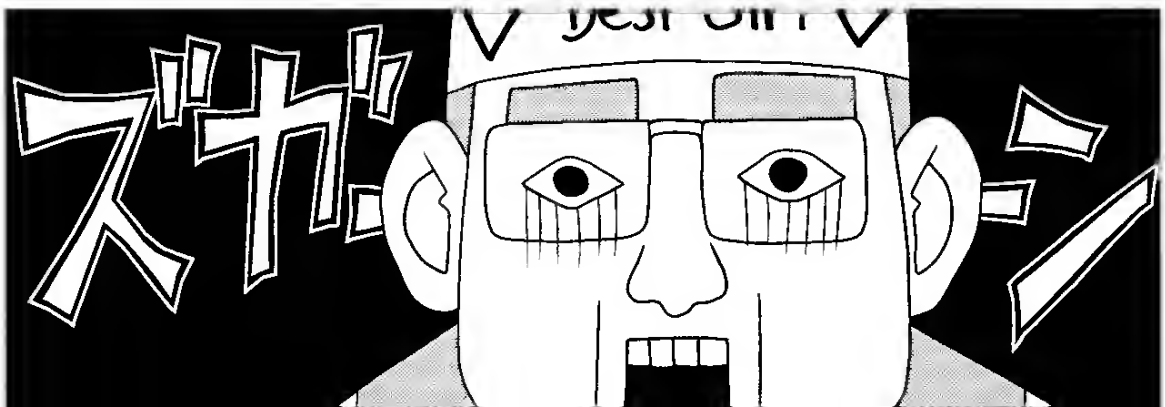

ぞろぞろ むーん
WHAT'S WITH THIS CROWD?
IT LOOKS LIKE THERE WAS AN IDOL GROUP CONCERT IN THE AUDITORIUM.


Best Gi
I HAVE SOME UNRELEASED PHOTOS OF YOUR FAVORITE MEMBER OVER HERE, MISTER.

ALRIGHT! LET'S SELL THEM SOME PILLOWS!




Best Girl
SERIOUSLY?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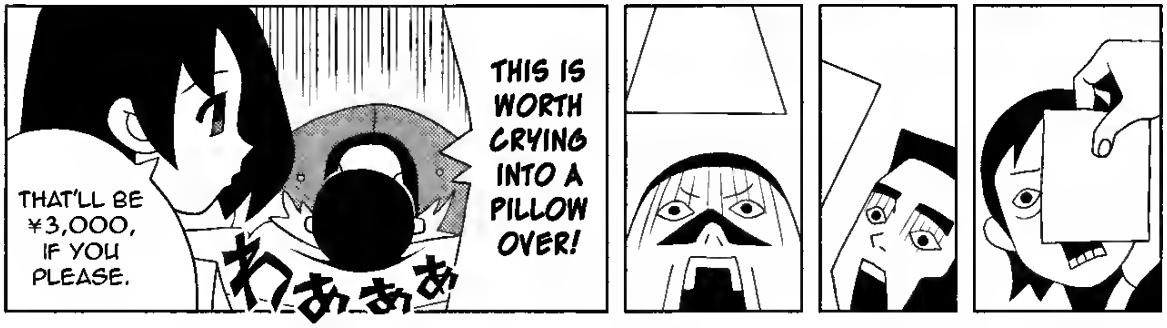
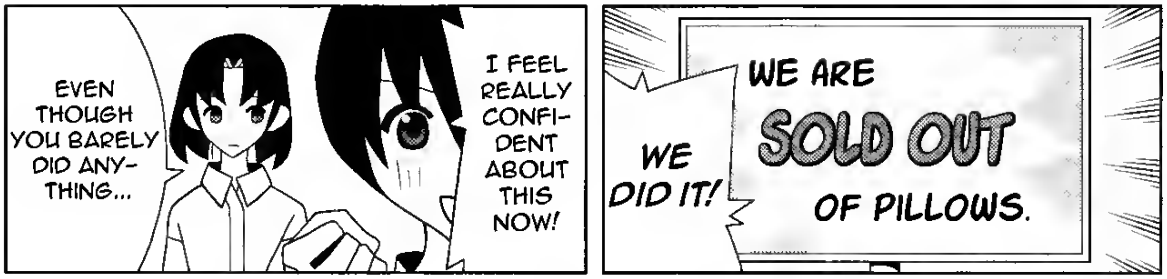
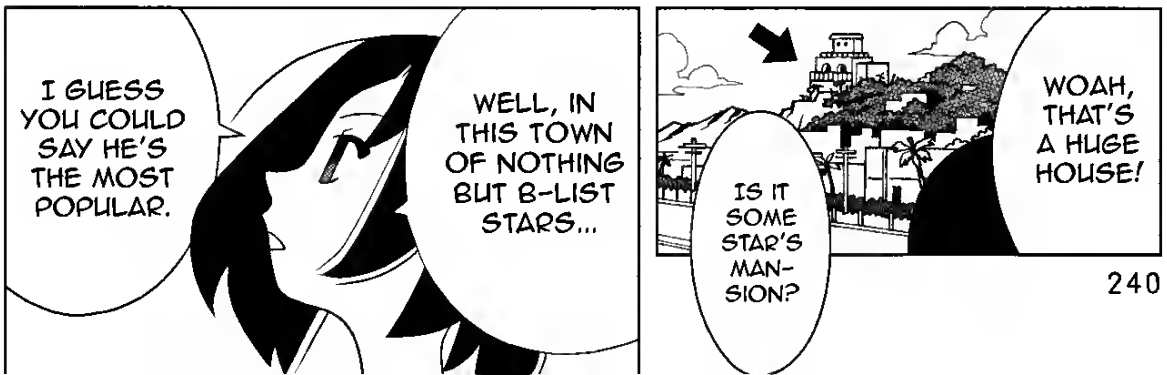
わあああ
THIS IS A TIME FOR CRYING INTO A PILLOW!
THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PURCHASE.

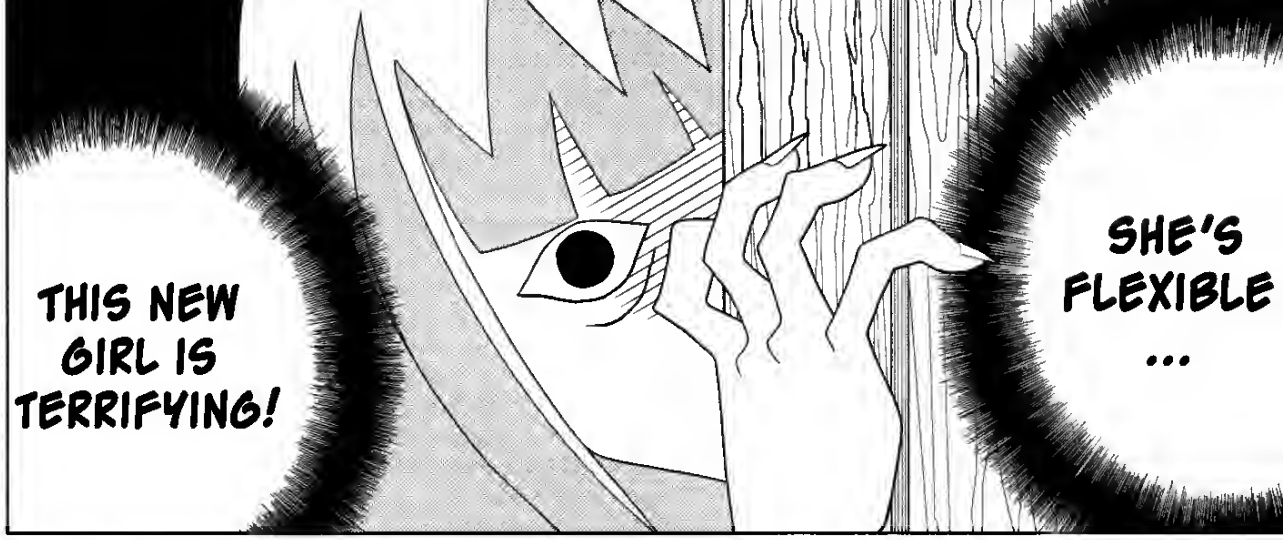

THIS IS WORTH CRYING INTO A PILLOW OVER!
わあああ
THAT'LL BE ¥3,000, IF YOU PLEASE.


I FEEL REALLY CONFI-DENT ABOUT THIS NOW!
EVEN THOUGH YOU BARELY DID ANY-THING...
WE DID IT!
WE ARE SOLD OUT OF PILLOWS.

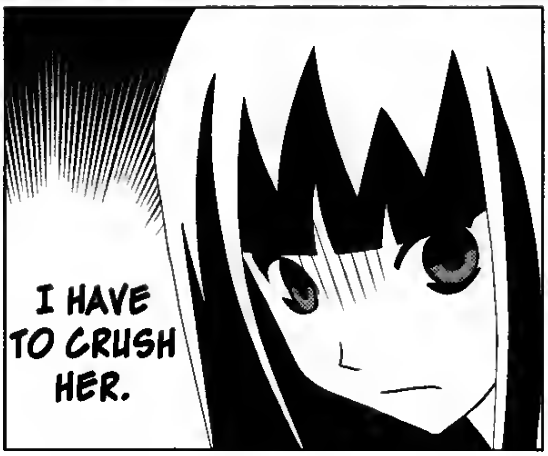
I FEEL LIKE I'VE COME TO UNDERSTAND HOW FUN PILLOW-WORK CAN BE.
REALLY? THAT'S GOOD.


WOAH, THAT'S A HUGE HOUSE!
IS IT SOME STAR'S MAN-SION?
WELL, IN THIS TOWN OF NOTHING BUT B-LIST STARS...
I GUESS YOU COULD SAY HE'S THE MOST POPULAR.

SENSEI, IT'S ALMOST TIME FOR YOUR SCENE.
A MADE MAN...
HUH?
FUFU FU...
IT WENT GREAT!
HOW WAS IT?
AH
ざっ
YOU CAN JUST LEAVE ANY PILLOW-WORK UP TO ME!
DOES ANYONE HAVE ANY PILLOW-WORK THEY NEED DOING?
AHA
AHA HA ...


THIS NEW GIRL IS TERRIFYING!
SHE'S FLEXIBLE ...

AH...
SENSEI, IF YOU PLEASE!


I HAVE TO CRUSH HER.

EH?
IT LOOKS LIKE OUR TOWN'S TOP STAR JUST TOOK THE STAGE.

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ペロ
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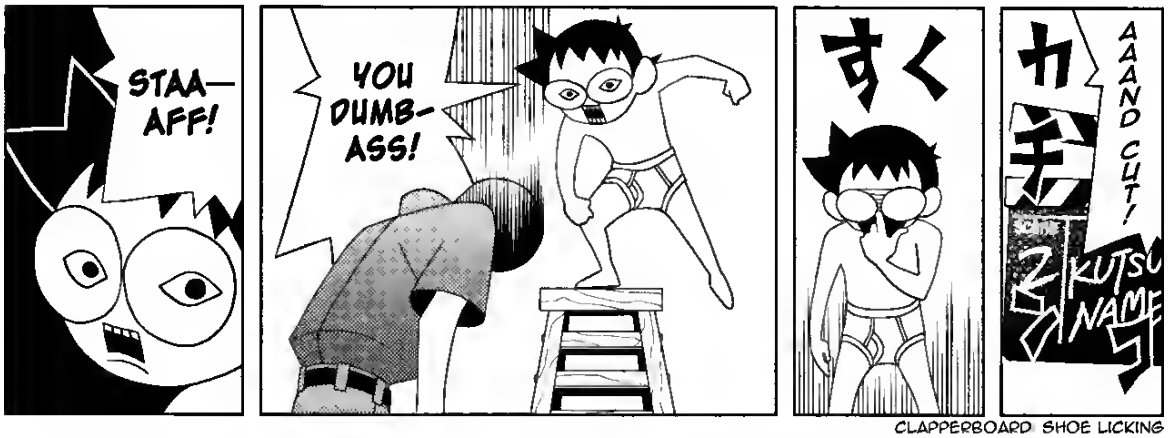
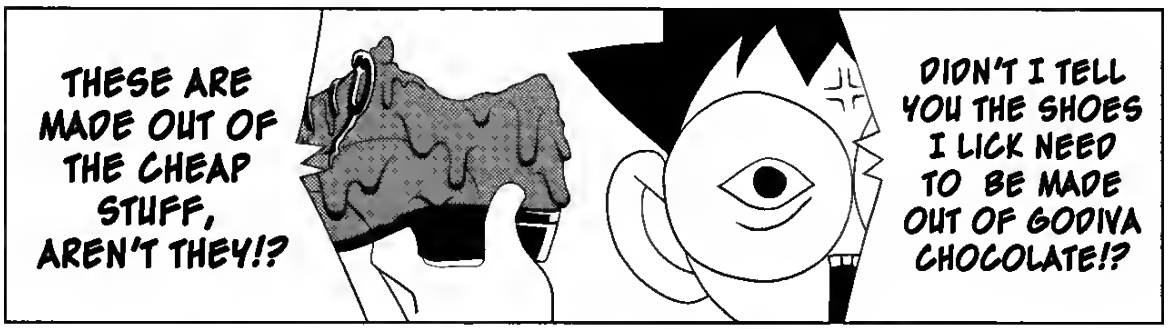
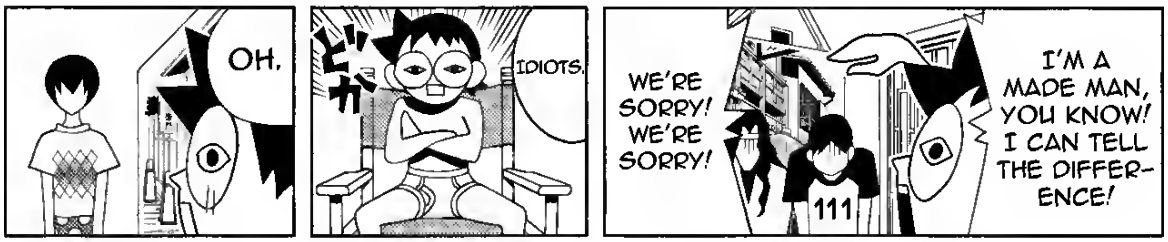
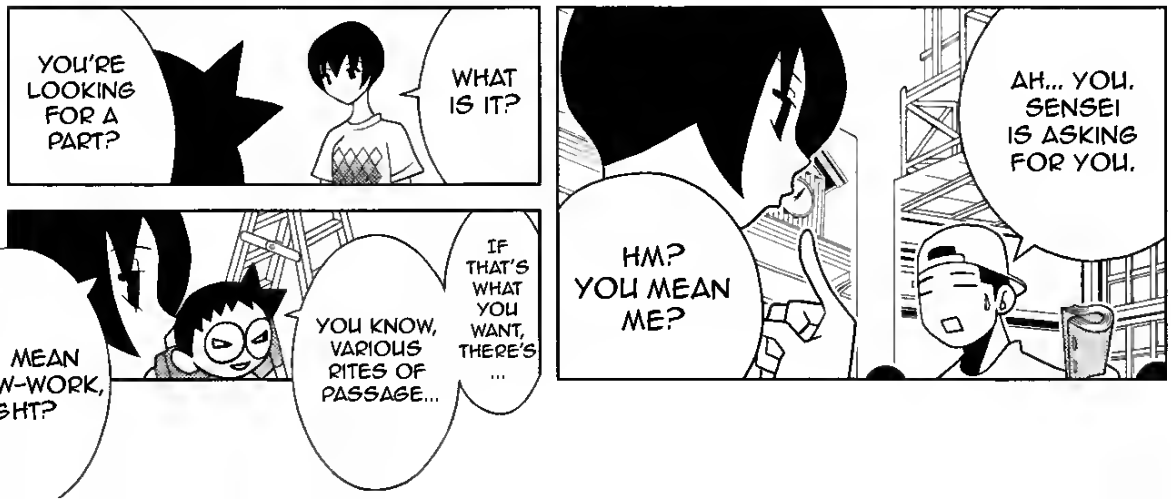
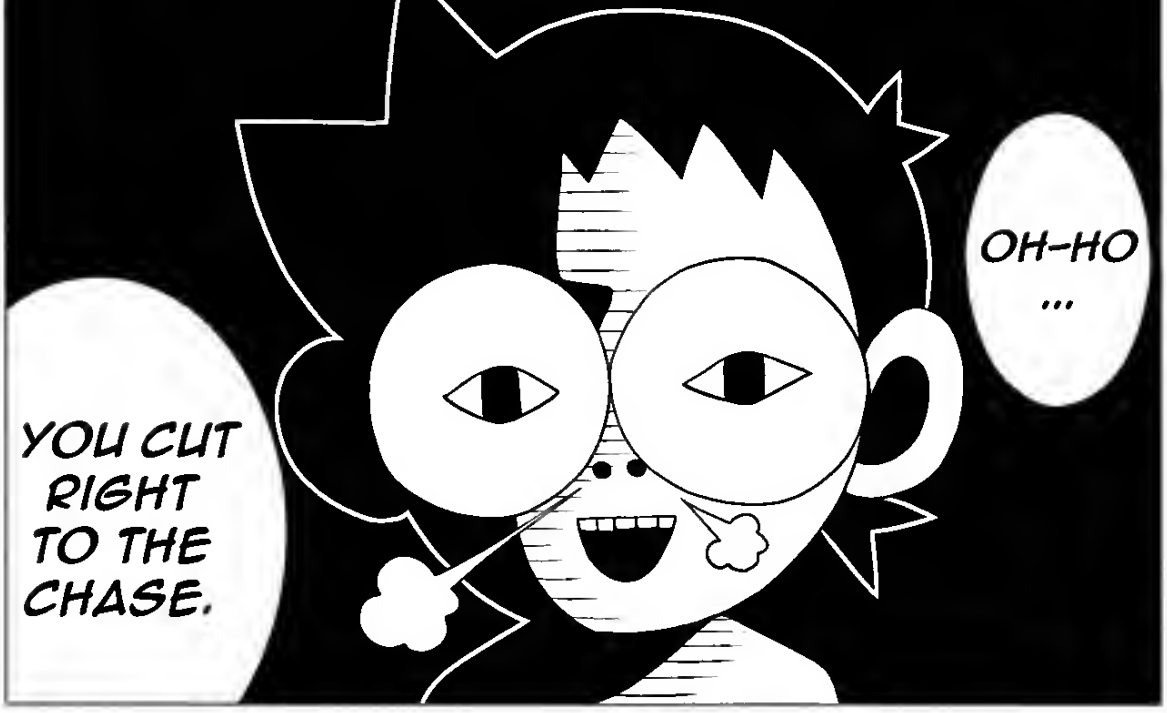


CLAPPERBOARD SHOE LICKING

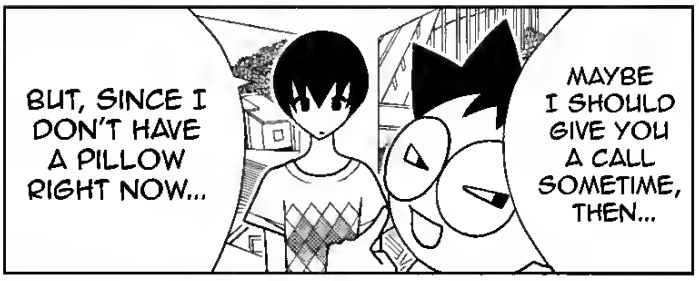


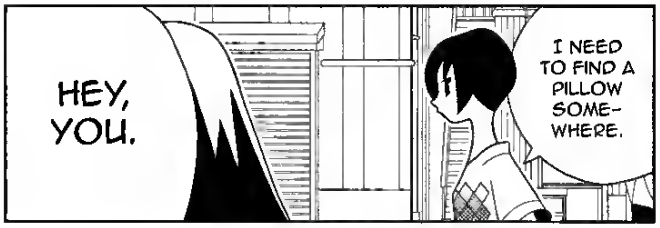


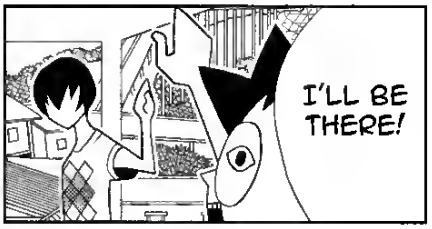

YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A PART?
WHAT IS IT?
HM? YOU MEAN ME?
AH... YOU. SENSEI IS ASKING FOR YOU.
YOU MEAN PILLOW-WORK, RIGHT?
YOU KNOW, VARIOUS RITES OF PASSAGE...
IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT, THERE'S ...

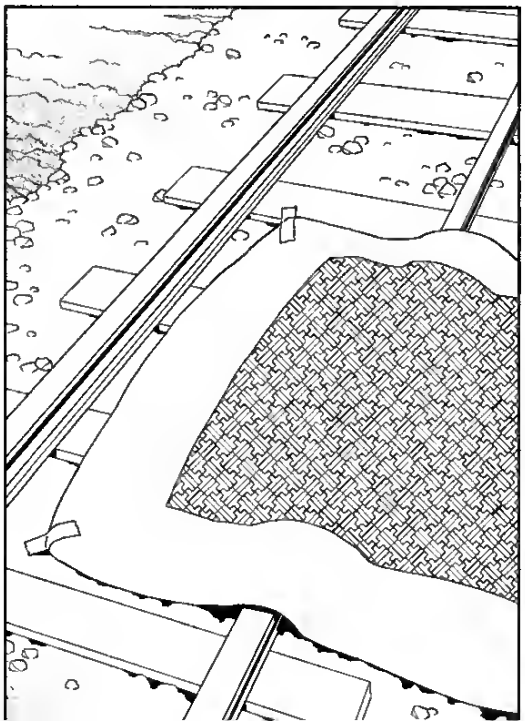

YOU CUT RIGHT TO THE CHASE.
OH-HO ...

I'LL CONTACT YOU AFTER I'VE GOTTEN EVERYTHING READY.


BUT, SINCE I DON'T HAVE A PILLOW RIGHT NOW...
MAYBE I SHOULD GIVE YOU A CALL SOMETIME, THEN...


HEY, YOU.
I NEED TO FIND A PILLOW SOME-WHERE.


I'LL BE THERE!



I CAN TAKE YOU TO ONE THAT'S TOP-OF-ITS-CLASS.
IF IT'S A PILLOW YOU'RE LOOKING FOR...

I CAN PROMISE IT'LL BE THE MOST PEACEFUL SLEEP YOU'VE EVER HAD.
IT'S A RAILWAY SLEEPER.
THE KING OF PILLOWS: A PILLOW-WITHIN-A-PILLOW.
DON'T BE SHY! TAKE A NAP!
GO ON!
SO THIS IS THE HIGHEST PEAK OF THE WORLD OF PILLOWS!
I'LL JUST HAVE HIM COME TO THE STORE TOMORROW AFTER ALL.
HMM... A PILLOW LEFT OUT IN THE OPEN LIKE THIS ISN'T VERY CLEAN THOUGH, IS IT?
I'LL BE RIGHT OVER.
OH? THE PREPARATIONS ARE READY?
パーン
I SHOULD COME BY THE STORE TOMORROW?
EH? WHAT?
ABOUT THAT...
CAN I INTEREST YOU IN A PILLOW?
ICE MAN

IT TURNS OUT I DON'T REALLY NEED A PILLOW ANYMORE.

JUST SPECIAL EFFECTS, JUST SPECIAL EFFECTS...
PERHAPS A FLOWER STAND OR SOMETHING WOULD BE MORE APPRO-PRIATE?
THAT'S TOO BAD.
AW...

Fin

Translator's Notes

- *Page 2, Panel 2: "Deep Stagnation"*
  Also the title of a fictional manga featured in SZS chapter 96. This version is written with a variant character for "stagnation" which suggests stagnant mud rather than hesitation or stalling.

- *Page 4, Final Panel: "10Q Hands"*
  A parody of the Tokyu Hands department store, also featured in SZS chapter 196 as the store where Ruuko worked part time.

- *Page 7, Panel 1: "Yomemakura Hagu"*
  His name means "wife-pillow hug." A parody of novelist Yumemakura Baku.

- *Page 7, Final Panel: "refund academy"*
  "Hensaijuku," a parody of the genius academy (tensaijuku) from Katte ni Kaizou.

- *Page 16, Panel 1: "railway sleeper"*
  In Japanese the wooden slats beneath railroad tracks are called "makuraki," literally meaning "pillow wood." Although they're usually referred to as "railroad ties" or "crossties" in American English, the British "railway sleeper" better conveys the joke.